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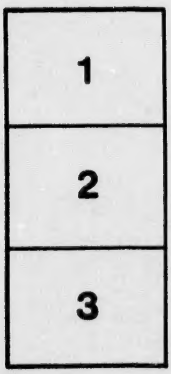

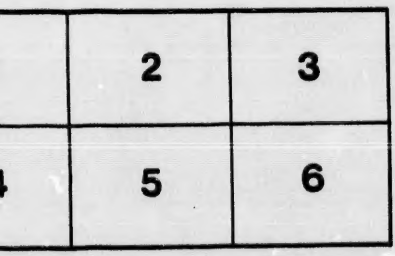

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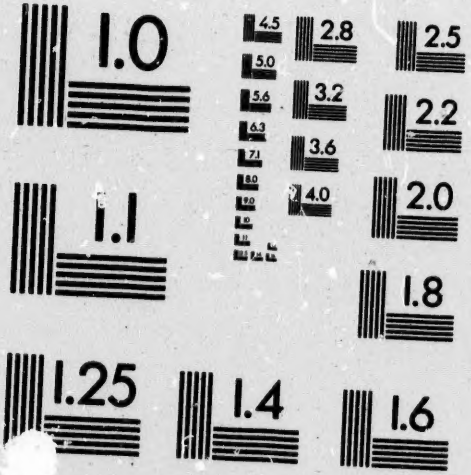

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A FRIENDLY VISIT

TO THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

by Richard Cecil

IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER.

Eccl. vii. 14.

Many are the sayings of the wise,
In ancient and in modern books enroll'd,
Extolling Patience——
But to th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails; or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

MILTON.

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A

FRIENDLY VISIT, &c.

YOUR preſent affliction, my dear friend, demands ſomething more than the uſual forms of condolence. Sorrow, which like yours, cannot be prevented, may yet be alleviated and improved. This is my deſign in addreſſing you, and if I ſeem to intrude upon your retirement, let my motive be my apology. Having felt how much better it is to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting; * having received my beſt leſſons, companions, and even comforts, in it; I would adminiſter from my little ſtock of experience: and while I thus endeavour to aſſiſt your meditations, ſhall rejoice if I may contribute, though but a mite, to your comfort.

* Eccl. vii. 2.

Were I, indeed, acquainted with the peculiar circumſtances of your loſs, I ſhould employ particular conſiderations: but my preſent addreſs can have only a general aim; which is to acquaint the heart, at a favorable moment, with its grand concerns; to give it a ſerious impreſſion when ſoftened; and an heavenly direction when moved. Let us, therefore, ſit down humbly together in this houſe of mourning: If the heart of the wiſe be found* here, your experience, I hope, will prove that here alſo it is formed: and let us calmly contemplate ſome momentous objects intimately connected with it, and viewed with peculiar advantage from it.

OUR GOD is the firſt of theſe objects: with him we ſeldom form any cloſe acquaintance till we meet him in trouble. He commands ſilence now, that He may be heard; and removes intervening objects, that He may be ſeen. A SOVEREIGN DISPOSER appears, who, as Lord of all, hath only

* Eccl. vii. 4.

resumed what he lent; whose will is the law of his creatures; and who expressly declares his will in the present affliction. We should seriously consider, that all allowed repugnance to the determinations of his government (however made known to us) is sin; and that every wish to alter the appointments of his wisdom is folly: we know not what we ask. When God discovers himself in any matter, those who know him, will keep silence before him.* Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? How just was the reply; '*Behold I am vile! what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.*'†

This silent submission under trying dispensations, is variously exemplified as well as inculcated in the scriptures. An awful instance of sin and sorrow occurs in the family of Aaron: his sons disregarded a divine appointment, and there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; but Aaron held his peace.‡

* Hab ii. 20. † Job xl. ii. 4. ‡ Lev. x. 2. 3.

Eli, in similar circumstances, silenced his heart with this single but sufficient consideration, "*It is the Lord.*"* David, under a stroke which he declares consumed him, observes, "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because THOU didst it.*"† And Job, when stript of every comfort, blessed the name of Him who took away, as well as gave.‡ Whatever be the nature of your calamity, may it be attended with such an humble and child-like spirit as these possessed!

But the Sovereign Disposer is also the COMPASSIONATE FATHER. Among other instances of his tenderness, you may have observed the peculiar supports he affords under peculiar trials. Let us mark, and acknowledge, the hand which mingles mercy with judgment, and allevation with distress. The parents I have just mentioned lost their children under circumstances far more distressing than yours:—The desire of your eyes (if not the idol of your heart) was, perhaps, almost a stranger:) you

* 1 Sam. iii. 18. † Psa. xxxix. 9. ‡ Job. i. 21.

ſtrove hard to detain it, but He, who took the young children into his arms and bleſſed them, took yours; and, taking it, ſeemed to ſay, What I do thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhalt know hereafter;*—patiently ſuffer this little one to come unto me, for of ſuch is my kingdom† compoſed:—Verily I ſay unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father.‡ "If I take away your child, I take it to myſelf—Is not this infinitely beyond any thing you could do for it? Could you ſay to it, if it had lived, 'Thou ſhalt *weep no more,—the days of thy mourning are ended?*'‖ Could you ſhew it any thing in this world like the glory of God, and of the Lamb?§ Could you raiſe it to any honour here like receiving a crown of life?"¶

The voice of a Father of mercies and a God of all comfort** ſpeaks as diſtinctly in the death as in the birth of an in-

* John xiii. 7. † Matt. x. 14.
‡ Matt. xviii. 10. ‖ Iſa. xxx. 19.
§ Rev. xxii. 23. ¶ James i. 12. ** 2 Cor. i 3.

fant. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentations and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refuſed to be comforted, becauſe they were not. Thus ſaith the Lord, 'Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, ſaith the Lord, that thy children ſhall come again to their own border.* It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of theſe little ones ſhould periſh.'†

Is it a pious Friend that has juſt yielded up his breath? The ſame voice ſeems to ſay, 'Turn from him, or rather turn from his *clay*—his faded *garment*.—He himſelf *is taken from the evil to come;*—*He is entered into peace.*'‡

When the able miniſter, the exemplary parent, or the faithful partner depart, a conſternation often ſeizes the circles which they bleſſed. We are ſo ſtunned by the ſudden blow, or occupied with the diſtreſſing circumſtances, that we ſcarcely can hear God ſaying, 'Fear not, I, even I, am he that comforteth

* Jer. xv. 17. † Matt. xviii. 14. ‡ Isa. lvii. 12.

you :* I, your Father, am yet alive ; I gave you your departed friend ; I sent every benefit which was conveyed thro' him ; trust me for blessings yet in store ; trust me with him, and with yourselves.'

Whatever notions one who lives without God in the world may form of dying, We should learn from his word to regard it merely as a translation,—a change in which nothing is lost which is really valuable. As surely as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so surely do we believe that them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.† Taught of God, we should view losses, sickness, pain, and death, but as the several trying stages by which a good man, like Joseph, is conducted from a tent to a court. Sin his disorder ; Christ his physician ; Pain his medicine ; the Bible his support ; the Grave his bed ; and Death itself an Angel, expressly sent to release the worn-out Labourer, or crown the faithful Soldier. I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed

* Isa. li. 12. † 1 Thess. iv. 14.

are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow them.*

But admitting the state of your departed Friend to be doubtful, yet in all cases that are really so, let us cultivate honourable thoughts of God; let us remember the FAITHFUL CREATOR. Righteousness is his throne though clouds surround it. Whatever he has left obscure we may safely leave him to explain. Let us recollect that, amidst innumerable obscurities, he hath made things clear in proportion as they are important; and therefore repeatedly urges it upon our conscience, that the door is still open to us;—that it is awful to stand before it unresolved;—that we must trust him to-day;—and that to-morrow he will equally remove our conjectures and our complaints.

Perhaps you are ready to reply, '*I have heard many such things*: and *I also could speak as you do, if your soul were*

* Rev. xiv. 13.

*in my soul's stead :** but my heart, and my expectations are so crushed by this blow, that I can hear nothing but "*thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound grievous ;—thou hast no healing medicines.*"†

Beware, however, of falling into their sin who limited the Holy One of Israel.‡ There is a charge continually brought against man, that in his trouble, the Source and the Resource are equally forgotten. Though affliction cometh not forth of the dust,‖—yet none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth Songs in the night?§ Endeavour then, in extremities, to recollect an ALL-SUFFICIENT FRIEND—a very present HELP in trouble. HE at least may add (as he does in the passage just alluded to) '*I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord.*' Cannot the voice which rebuked a tempestuous sea calm our troubled spirits? Is his hand shortened at all, that he cannot bless our latter end, like

* Job xvii. 2, 4. † Jer. xxx. 12, 13.
‡ Psa. lxxviii. 41. ‖ Job v. 6. § Job xxxv. 10.

Job's, more than the beginning?* Is it not the Lord that maketh poor, and maketh rich; that bringeth low and lifteth up?† Many, whose hearts have been desolate like yours, while they have looked around, have at length looked UPWARD unto Him and been lightened.‡ A single promise has afforded them not only relief, but strong consolation.

Let us therefore, my dear friend, turn again to this strong hold as prisoners of hope: even to-day can He render double to us.‖ Let us look to Abraham's GOD, and his encouragement is ours; *Fear not,—I am God Almighty*§—*q. d.* I am all-sufficient in all cases: I am enough; *and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think.*¶ I have taken away thy *Gourd*, but dost thou well to be angry?—have I left nothing for thankfulness?—this world however cannot be your *home*, nor its objects your *consolation*: they are all too

* Job xlii. 12. † 1 Sam. ii. 7. ‡ Psa. xxxiv. 5.
‖ Zech. ix. 12. § Gen. xvii. 1. ¶ Eph. iii. 20.

poor for the ſoul of man. *Look unto Me and be ſaved :*—*Acquaint thyſelf with Me and be at peace :*†—*Follow Me and you ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but have the light of life.*‡ However dark and diſtreſſing the preſent ſtate of things may appear, *commit thy fatherleſs children to my care, I will preſerve them alive ; and let the widows truſt in me.*'‖

Still the beloved object is gone, and your heart follows it. You can ſcarcely receive counſel from infinite Wiſdom, or comfort from Omnipotence. To every freſh encouragement you are ready to reply, '*Wilt thou ſhew wonders to the dead ?*—*ſhall the dead ariſe and praiſe thee ?*—*ſhall thy loving kindneſs be declared in the grave ? or thy faithfulneſs in deſtruction ?*'§ His word repeatedly aſſures you they ſhall ; and that all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice ;¶ but it informs you alſo, that He can do abundantly more for the living than

* Iſa. xlv. 22. † Job xxii. 21. ‡ John viii. 12.
‖ Jer. xlix. 11. § Pſa. lxxxviii. 10, 11. ¶ John v. 28.

merely reſtore their dead friends, or revive their fainting ſpirits;--it teaches you that He can ſanctify the ſeparation, ---that He can give a divine life to the ſurvivor, though dead in treſpaſſes and ſins,* and inſeparably unite both in his kingdom. If the Comforter could make up for the loſs of Chriſt's bodily preſence; yea, make it even expedient that He ſhould go away;† how much more can he ſupply the place of every creature!

May this COMFORTER, writing his word in your mind, help you to ſay with a confidence highly honourable to himſelf and his goſpel, 'My poor periſhing gourd is, indeed, withered a day before I expected it;---my broken reed is gone;---but God is left,---a father to the fatherleſs,--- an huſband to the widow,‡--and now, Lord, what wait I for? truly my hope is in thee.‖ Thou canſt give me, in thine houſe, a place and a name better than of ſons and of daugh-

* Eph. ii. 1. † John xvi. 7. ‡ Psa. lxviii. 5. ‖ Psa. xxxix. 7.

ters, even an everlasting name which shall not be cut off ;* and therefore, though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the GOD OF MY SALVATION.†

Once more ; let us endeavour, at such seasons as these, to recognize a GRACIOUS MONITOR. Whenever the Lord strikes, he speaks. Let us listen at such a time as this with humble attention; yet with holy confidence, for it is the voice of a Friend,---a wonderful Counsellor. Let us with the Prophet resolve to ascend the tower of observation, and observe what He will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reproved. If with him we thus watch our dispensation, at the end, like his, it shall speak.‡

God is continually raising up witnesses, and sending them in his name to sound the alarm in Zion.‖ He charges them to admonish the wise, as well as the

* Isa. lvi. 5. † Hab. iii. 17, 18.
‡ Hab. ii. 1—3. ‖ Joel ii. 1.

fooliſh Virgin, to beware of ſlumbering, ſince the bridegroom is at hand: and when one is called away, to cry to thoſe that remain, '*Be ye alſo ready, for in ſuch an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.*'* Some indeed, like the ſons of Lot, deſperately ſcorn the admonition, and treat it as the fear of dotage.† Some, like thoſe in the Acts, are in doubt, ſaying one to another, '*What meaneth this?*'—*and others mocking reply, Theſe men are full of new wine.*'‡ But TRUTH, like a rock furiouſly aſſaulted, but unſhaken, remains to ſcorn its ſcorners: and, while the witneſſes continue to bear a faithful and conſiſtent teſtimony, God, ſooner or later, appears in vindication of their integrity and his own word. Entering a careleſs family, he ſmites the firſt born; and, as one that will be heard, calls aloud, '*Awake, thou that ſleepeſt; ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light.*'‖

And is it not, my afflicted friend, an

* Matt. xxiv. 44. † Gen. xix. 14.
‡ Acts ii. 12, 13. ‖ Eph. v. 14.

infinite mercy, if by any means, God will enter with such a light,---that he will rouse such a sleeper?---that, by his minister Death, he will arrest the attention of him who has slighted every other minister? What patience! what long suffering! to take such an one a part; bring him from noise and occupation into the secret and silent chamber; speak to his heart; and seal the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions! Is it not saying, '*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I make thee as Admah?*'* Certain it is, that questions, which before only reached the ear, often now, like barbed arrows, remain fixed in the conscience---conscience, no longer stifled or amused, discovers the CONTENDER, and, trembling before him, cries, '*Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.*'†

This, I say, is often the case, and

* Hosea xi. 8. † Jer. xxxi 18.

ſhould it be realized in yours, as it has been in that of your preſent Viſitor; if, inſtead of flying for relief to every object but God, you are brought humbly to his feet with patient ſubmiſſion, ſerious inquiry, fervent prayer, holy reſolution, and firm reliance; if, in a word, by the ſevereſt ſtroke, the enchantment is alſo broken,---your ſoul eſcaped as a bird out of the ſnare of the fowler,* and returned to its proper REST; what reaſon will you have to ſay,

Those we call *wretched* are a chosen band.
Amid my list of blessings infinite,
Stand this the foremost,--'*That my heart has bled.*'
For *All* I bless Thee;—Most, for the *severe*:
Her death,—*my own* at hand——

But death at hand (as an old writer expreſſes it) ſhould be death in view, and lead us to conſider next

OUR PROSPECTS from this houſe of Sorrow, as the inhabitants of a preſent and future world. Many ſuppoſe that they can beſt contemplate the preſent world by crowding the Houſe of

* Pſa. cxxiv. 7.

Mirth;* their whole deportment, however, shews that it makes them much too giddy for serious observation: having eyes they see not.†

Look at the deceased, and contemplate present things. His days an handbreath;---his beauty consumed like the moth-fretten garment;---his cares and pleasures a dream;---his attainments as the grass, which flourisheth in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withered;---his years a tale;---his strength, labour and sorrow. So soon is the whole cut off and fled, that we cannot help repeating with the Psalmist, Verily—every man—at his best estate—is altogether VANITY,‡—or a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.‖

Few, perhaps, reflect, when they follow a friend to his grave, that life itself exhibits little more than a funeral procession, were friend follows friend, weeping to-day and wept for to-morrow.

* Eccl. vii. 4. † Mark viii. 18.
‡ Psa. xxxix. and xc. ‖ James iv. 14.

While we are talking of one, another passes—we are alarmed, but behold a third! There is, however, relief in this very reflection; 'My friend is gone, but am I weeping as if I were to *stay*? —Is he sent for in the *morning*? in the *afternoon* I shall certainly be called.' Inconsolable distress, therefore, may ungird our loins, may waste our hours, and cause us to make fatal mistakes in the journey, but does not bring us forward a single step towards meeting our friends in that state, where present joys and sorrows will be recollected only as the dream of a distempered night.

If, after many former admonitions, an ENEMY still urged us to climb; and, as we ascended, pointed to the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;* if our hearts have been the dupes of the vanishing prospect, and our ears eagerly heard the proposal, '*all these things will I give thee*;'† let us now hear the voice of a FRIEND, calling us, though in an unbeaten way, to commune with

* Matt. iv. 8. † Matt. iv. 9.

our heart and be ſtill ;*—to know, at leaſt in this our day of viſitation, the things which belong to our peace ;† and alſo what thoſe things are which hide them from our eyes.

It is at ſuch ſeaſons as theſe that we more clearly detect the lies of life. It is in the Houſe of Mourning that, what the ſcripture calls, lying vanities, lie peculiarly naked and expoſed. Let us here examine what ſo lately dazzled us. What now is the purple and fine linen‡ that caught our eye? What is it to fare ſumptuouſly only for a day? Who is he that cries, '*Soul, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, take thy eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry?*'‖ I truſt you now feel the deep miſery and utter ruin of that dying creature, who can ſay nothing better to his ſoul than this. You can ſcarcely help crying out, 'What ſottiſhneſs, what madneſs this, in a moment ſo intereſting as life!—with a proſpect ſo awful as Eternity!'

* Pſa. iv. 4. † Luke xix. 42. ‡ Luke xvi. 19.
‖ Luke xii. 19.

The truth is, God ſpeaks variouſly and inceſſantly to man reſpecting his proſpect both preſent and future; but preſent things ſeize his heart, blind his eyes, ſtupify his conſcience, and carry him away captive. Now "affliction is God ſpeaking louder," and ſtriving with the heart of man:—crying, as he has lately in your houſe, '*Ariſe and depart, this is not your reſt; it is polluted,* and, if you perſiſt in attempting to make a reſt of it, *will deſtroy you with a ſore deſtruction.*'*

Our plan, indeed, is the very reverſe of his: we love our native ſoil, and try to ſtrike our roots deeper and deeper into it: firmly fixed in earth, we would fain draw our whole life, ſtrength, and nouriſhment, from it. And here we ſhould not only fade as a leaf,† but with every tree that beareth not good fruit, be hewn down and caſt into the fire,‡ did not mercy interpoſe.

We ſeldom, however, diſcern mercy in its firſt approach. Is it mercy that

* Mic. ii. 10. † Isa. lxiv 6. Matt. iii. 10.

aks variouſly tears me up by the roots?—that cuts the eſpecting his fibres of ſweeteſt union?—does it prune future; but away the fineſt branches? nip the love- art, blind his lieſt buds? and cover the earth with e, and carry bloſſoms?—Yes, verily,—ſince the very "affliction is life of the whole often depends upon the and ſtriving removal of a part, mercy will wound to rying, as he heal: regard to the tree will ſtrip off its *riſe and de-* moſt flouriſhing ſuckers: the great Huſ- *it is polluted,* bandman will not fail to adopt the ſharp- empting to eſt means for the improvement of his *y you with a* choiceſt plants: for every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may very reverſe bring forth more fruit.* Though the ſoil, and try Lord cauſe grief, yet it is in compaſſion, and deeper and according to the multitude of his , we would mercies, for he doth not afflict willing- ength, and ly, nor grieve the children of men;† d here we but ſoon or late inſtructs all his children † but with to ſay, '*I know, O Lord, that thy judg-* good fruit, *ments are right, and that thou in faithful-* the fire, ‡ *neſs haſt afflicted me.*'‡

Let not, therefore, the change of the ern mercy preſent ſcene diſcompoſe but direct us: mercy that it changes, in order to preſent the only

Matt. iii. 10. * John xv. 2. † Lam. iii. 32, 33. ‡ Pſa. cxix. 75.

unchangeable one. By thus rending the veils which men try to throw over a dying ſtate, and diſcovering TEKEL* written on every creature, the moſt careleſs are often ſo rouſed, that they ſeem to awake and recover themſelves: they appear, for a time at leaſt, to become wiſe, to underſtand theſe things, and ſeriouſly to conſider their latter end.† May this ſalutary impreſſion, however, my dear friend, never be worn from your mind, but lead you habitually to look from this fading, to that abiding proſpect which is to be found only in the ETERNAL WORLD,—and on which it may be neceſſary here to drop a reflection or two.

I think you muſt often have remarked that the urgency and buſtle of preſent things, not only raiſe a cloud of duſt before our future proſpects, but early beget a falſe principle that the preſent life is the only one. You muſt alſo have obſerved that ten thouſand falſe maxims, which daily fly through the world, take

* i. e. wanting. Dan. v. 27. † Deut. xxxii. 29.

their rise from this prime falsehood. Whereas, in fact, the present life, instead of being the whole, is comparatively nothing: a stage, a porch, a dream, a weary day's journey. What is this drop to the ocean before us? What this moment to eternity? As a theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace; or as a stage, on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition; the present state is infinitely grand and important: but surely no greater imposition can be put upon the pilgrim than to persuade him that he is at home; or to make him forget and drown his eternal interest in such a vision of the night as Life.

Do you not, my Dear Friend, sensibly perceive this? While you sit here, does not the cloud break? and the mist subside? Have you not already so realized a better, that it is an heavenly country,* as to admire him who pitched

* Heb. xi. 16.

only a tent here,* but ſtedfaſtly looked for a city that hath foundations?† Are you not ready to take hold of the ſkirt of this Jew, ſaying, *'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you?'*‡

Seeing this, you only ſee truths ever exhibited in the ſcriptures, and living principles in all who are taught of God;‖ for he alone can enable us to uſe his own diſcoveries; and how gracious is he, when he removes any object which might prevent our thus ſeeing Himſelf, his kingdom, and his righteouſneſs? or whoſe removal may prove the occaſion of our ſeeking them?

Juſt before the flood, there were, doubtleſs, among their men of renown,§ admired projectors; but there appears to have been but one truly wiſe man among them: one who ſaw and ſeriouſly regarded his proſpects. And he, being warned of God of things not ſeen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark

* Heb. xi. 9. † Heb. xi. 10. ‡ Zech. viii. 23.
‖ John vi. 45. § Gen. vi. 4.

to the saving of his house.* Now such a man is the Christian. He feels the world passing away, with the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.† 'I feel,' says he, 'that however finely they dress the pageant of this world, it *passeth by*;‡ to a creature like me, going, hastening, such an *Ark* is worth more than ten thousand dying worlds. Let the gay laugh; *let the despisers wonder and perish*;‖ with such prospects before me, I *must* be serious. He that cannot lie has revealed the *terrors* as well as the glories of a future state: he speaks of *a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched*,§ as well as of *a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*.¶ I must not, I dare not, shut my eyes against these awful realities. I will not sacrifice my soul to a jest, nor miss the single opportunity afforded me, for its salvation. He that calls for my whole heart is worthy of it: while the things which have hitherto engrossed it,

* Heb. xi. 7. † 1 John ii. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. vii. 31.
‖ Acts xiii. 41. § Mark ix. 44. ¶ Psa. xvi. 11.

though they cannot satisfy, I find they can ruin it—*I will therefore arise and go to my Father*,*—to my Saviour, who has promised to *cast out none that come unto him*.† Yea, doubtless, I *count all things but loss that I may be found in him*,‡ the true ARK, the only REFUGE, which God has provided for perishing sinners.'

Such a man, indeed, is the Christian, but the Christian, after all, is but a man. In a state like this, he needs to be continually reminded of his own principles. Even the wise Virgin slumbers though the Bridegroom is at hand. But a cry is often made in the family, before that which will at midnight awaken the world: one like that in the house of Pharaoh for his first-born; or that so lately heard in yours. A cry, which while it rouses the sleeper, fills his eyes with tears and his heart with pangs; often produces such views of God, of the present, and of the eternal state, as all other monitors would have attempted in vain.

* Luke xv. 18. † John vi. 37. ‡ Phil. iii. 8. 9.

Here then, my afflicted, but, I hope, inſtructed, friend, let us ſtudy the heavenly ſcience of gaining by loſſes, and riſing by depreſſions. Leaving the wilderneſs, like Moſes, let us aſcend the mount of ſcriptural diſcovery, and ſurvey a proſpect of which his was but a ſhadow. Let us look from viciſſitude and deſolation to what alone is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away;* and, in the houſe of affliction and death, let us contemplate a houſe not made with hands eternal in the heavens.† How refreſhing to look from a family bereft of its companions and comforts to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem; to an innumerable company of angels; and to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born which are written in heaven!‡—the only family which cannot be divided;—the only friendſhip which ſhall not diſappoint our warmeſt expectation.

* 1 Pet. i. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 1. ‡ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

Glorious as this proſpect is, (perhaps you are ready to reply) 'I have been long in the habit of viewing it very indiſtinctly. My attention has been ſo fixed on one below, that I live looking into the grave rather than beyond it. My ſpirits are ſo broken, my heart ſo wounded, and my eyes ſo dim with watching and weeping, that I can hardly read what is before me, or recollect what I read. If ſerious reflection compoſes me for a few moments, I ſoon relapſe, and ſeem to loſe ſight of every ſupport. I indeed ſeverely feel what you ſay concerning the preſent life, but I view the glories of the future like a ſtarving creature, who, looking through the gate of the wealthy, ſurveys a plenty which but increaſes his anguiſh,'

There is, however, this difference at leaſt between your caſes; the plenty which you ſee is yours, if you are really willing to accept it. You never received a gift which was ſo freely beſtowed, or ſo ſuited to your neceſſity, as the gift of God, which is eternal life through

Jeſus Chriſt.* In order to view this more diſtinctly, let us conſider the ſufficiency of

OUR PROVISIONS—For wiſdom hath built her houſe, ſhe hath killed her beaſts, ſhe hath mingled her wine, and furniſhed her table. She alſo crieth upon the higheſt places of the city, '*Whoſo is ſimple, let him turn in hither*;' and to him that wanteth underſtanding ſhe ſaith, '*Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled; forſake the fooliſh and live.*'†

Man, indeed, is daily reminded by the thorns at his feet, by the ſweat of his brow, and by the duſt to which he is returning, that his paradiſe is loſt:‡ but paradiſe regained is conſidered rather as an idea; a ſubject for poetry. That book, however, which I hope you have choſen as your beſt companion in the houſe of mourning, like the viſion of Jacob, not only ſhews the heavens opened, but diſcovers a gracious medium of communication and intercourſe, as it

* Rom. vi. 23. † Prov. ix. 1—6. ‡ Gen. iii. 18, 19.

were a ladder let down from heaven to earth.* A medium so suited to the state of man, that the weakest and vilest, who is humble enough to take hold of it as God's ordinance; advance a step at a time; and call for strength to proceed; may climb by it from earth to heaven.†

Are you, my dear friend, among the number of those, who stand before God not only as stript of their comforts, but humbled under sin as the cause of all the desolations with which our fallen state abounds? Open your book at the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. You will there perceive the most precious privilege of Paradise restored: the Creator descending to the condition and wants of his creature, and once more holding communion with him. The broken-hearted, the captive, and the mourner, are here shewn one mighty to save and to relieve: and, that such should not mistake their friend, when our Lord

* Gen. xxviii. 12.

† Compare Genesis xxviii. with John i. 51.

ſtood up in the ſynagogue to read, he ſelected this paſſage, and, having read it, he cloſed the book with ſaying, 'This *day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears.*'* 'I am, as if he had ſaid, this deliverer and deſire of nations;† the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever:‡ bleſſed are they that mourn; for they ſhall be comforted:§—bleſſed are ye that hunger now; for ye ſhall be filled:—bleſſed are ye that weep now; for ye ſhall laugh.'‖

I ſcarcely need obſerve that, in an addreſs like this, (a bow drawn at a venture) formal ſtatements of the different topics would be improper; and, therefore, I ſhall not attempt to deſcribe, in their order, the various proviſions comprehended in that ſcheme of redemption, uſually termed the goſpel. It may be neceſſary, however, to remark, that the whole is a propoſal to the broken heart, anſwering all its objections, and meeting all its wants: and

* Luke iv. 21. † Hag. ii. 7. ‡ Heb. xiii 8.
§ Matt. v. 4. ‖ Luke vi. 21.

that ſuch a propoſal will be cordially received only in proportion as this diſpoſition prevails.

As it is the ſick who beſt knows how to value a phyſician, the debtor a ſurety, and the criminal a pardon; ſo it is the awakened conſcience alone which will embrace a conſtitution calculated to humble the pride, and mortify the corruptions, as well as relieve the wants, of man. If without ſhedding of blood there can be no remiſſion,* he, who is earneſt to obtain it, will rejoice to find it though on the accurſed tree: and, however the preaching of this croſs ſhall be eſteemed fooliſhneſs among them that periſh,† ſuch an one will not only rejoice in the proviſion, but magnify the means. '*God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*'‡

Our Lord repreſents the bleſſings of his kingdom under the parable of a magnificent feaſt, which a king made for

* Heb. ix. 22. † 1 Cor. i. 18. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.

the marriage of his ſon; but when all things were ready, and invitations repeatedly ſent, he points out the ruin of the world in its indiſpoſition to accept his gracious propoſal. They made light of it, and went their ways! However different their purſuits, they all agreed to reject the invitation; they began with one conſent to make excuſe: ſome urged reaſons, and ſome abuſed the meſſengers; but what is this more than the hiſtory of human nature in every age?*

Let us, however, my dear friend, never forget that the gate lately mentioned,† though ſtrait, is open; and that only unbelief and indiſpoſition ſtand without. Chriſt has declared that all things are ready; may his gracious influence, accompanying this humbling providence, form in you a ſpiritual taſte for them! Certain I am that, whenever this is attained, his name will be as ointment poured forth;‡—it will give a ſavour even to obſolete poetry.

* Matt. xxii. 1—6. † Page 30. ‡ Cant. i. 3.

Christ is a path,—if any be misled ;
He is a robe,—if any naked be ;
If any chance to hunger—he is bread ;
If any be a bondman,—he is free ;
If any be but weak,—how strong is he !
To dead men life he is ;—to sick men health ;
To blind men sight ; and to the needy wealth ;
A pleasure without loss ; a treasure without stealth.

To prepare the heart for the reception of this treasure, as a God of order, he is pleased to use a system of means ; one of which I hope he is now employing for your soul's health. I love to indulge hope, for affliction is a seed time ; and let me freely inquire, since God has called you aside, has spoken so emphatically, and you have had leisure for serious meditation, do not the provisions of the gospel appear new, sufficient, & exactly suited to your case? Do you not mark that Gold which the thief cannot steal ? that foundation which no tempest can shake ? that life over which death has no power ? and that peace which the world can neither give nor take away ? Does not the religion of JESUS, that is so forgotten and degraded among men, stand forward now as the

one thing needful? Does not his friendſhip appear now to be that better part which ſhall not be taken away? * and which alone can help in extremities? In the wreck of human affairs, indeed, it is that God often makes his truth appear; and it cauſes his goſpel, like a plank thrown out to the periſhing mariner, to be properly known and prized.

"Theſe are the great occaſions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: when we have no help in ourſelves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater power? and to what hope may we not raiſe our eyes and hearts when we conſider that the GREATEST power is the BEST."

"Surely there is no [truly wiſe] man who, thus afflicted, does not ſeek ſuccour in the Goſpel which has brought life and immortality to light. The precepts of EPICURUS, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the univerſe make neceſſary, may ſilence, but not content us. The dictates of ZENO,

* Luke xix. 42.

who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may diſpoſe us to conceal our ſorrow, but cannot aſſuage it. Real alleviation of the loſs of friends, and rational tranquility in the proſpect of our own diſſolution, can be received only from the promiſes of Him in whoſe hands are life and death, and from the aſſurances of another and better ſtate, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole ſoul ſhall be filled with joy. Phyloſophy may infuſe STUBBORNESS, but religion only can give PATIENCE."*

In health and eaſe, ingenious ſpeculations may amuſe and ſatisfy us; but I think you now feel with me, that when He takes away the deſire of our eyes with a ſtroke,† our ſorrows are too deep to be alleviated by the mere orator or philoſopher; we even turn in diſguſt from him who would thus triſle with our caſe; we need a ſupport the world cannot afford. 'I faint,' ſays a wounded ſoul: 'I want an almighty

* Johnson. † Ezek. xxiv. 16.

arm to lean on now; yea, a very tender and compassionate one too;—one like that of the Son of Man. I need a merciful and faithful High Priest, who, having been tempted, knows how to succour the tempted;* —that Man of Sorrows, that Brother born for adversity, who, being acquainted with grief, can enter in my case, and commune with me in all the peculiarities of my distress. I now need one, who can quiet me on his own breast, and speak to me with his own voice, Weep not, the child is not dead but sleepeth.† Weep not, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,—when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.‡ It is true this is the land of death, but I am the resurrection and the life;‖—this is indeed, a dry and thirsty land where no water is;§ but I will lead you to fountains of living waters: I will wipe away all tears from your eyes.'¶

* Heb. ii. 17, 18. † Luke viii. 52.
‡ Isa. xliii. 2. ‖ John xi. 25. § Psa. lxiii. 1.
¶ Rev. vii. 17.

You are ready, perhaps, to say, 'O that I knew where I might find him;'—but religion has been with me rather a case of necessity than the high privilege of communing with such a comforter. I feel the misery of living at such a distance from my heavenly Friend, (especially at this time) but want liberty to approach nearer:—Could I, indeed, repose on the bosom you just mentioned—"but alas! my understanding is clouded, my faith weak, sense strong, and Satan busy in filling my thoughts with false notions, difficulties, and doubts respecting a future state, and the efficacy of prayer."* Though I see very gracious proposals made to returning sinners, I tremble to venture;—Death itself reminds me of transgression:—My thoughts fly every where but to God.

We readily acknowledge that among other views of death, it should be regarded as the wages of sin.† It is also natural for convinced sinners to tremble

* Lady Russel's Letters. † Rom. vi. 23.

before a Judge who charges even angels with folly. However pride may boaſt, or ignorance preſume, he who meaſures by the ſtandard of a law which is ſo ſpiritual as to regard a corrupt deſire, will conclude with the apoſtle, that every mouth muſt be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* A view of the divine character, and of his own, led not only a publican to ſmite upon his breaſt, as the ſeat of apoſtacy and polution, and cry, '*God be merciful to me a ſinner*,† but ſo perfect and upright a man as Job to abhor himſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes :‡ I may add that, as we become proficients in their ſchool, we ſhall be more ready to confeſs than to complain ;—we ſhall learn to juſtify God in any inſtance of his righteous diſpleaſure ; and humbly own, that he has laid upon us far leſs than our iniquities deſerve.‖

But while the Chriſtian, as a penitent,

* Rom. iii. 19. † Luke xviii. 13.
‡ Job. xlii. 6. ‖ Pſal. ciii. 10.

looks upon him whom he has pierced and mourns; as a believer, he looks at him who was wounded for tranſgreſſion and hopes. He finds it as deſperate to doubt the remedy, as to deny the diſorder. Having formerly ruſhed headlong with the preſumptuous, he now fears periſhing with the fearful and unbelieving.* He ſees an atonement of God's own providing; he pleads upon God's own authority the merit of that blood which cleanſeth from all ſin;† and by thus receiving the record which God gives of his Son, he ſets his ſeal to it that God is true.‡

Is this, my dear friend, in any degree your caſe?—Fearful, wandering, and wounded as your heart is, does it yet diſcover a reſting place?—Inſtead of wiſhing to evade the charge of "manifold ſins and wickedneſs committed by thought, word and deed againſt the Divine Majeſty; is the remembrance of them grievous, and the burden of them intolerable?" Do you ſincerely deſire

* Rev. xxi. 8. † 1 John i. 7. ‡ John iii. 33.

to be freed from this burden, and to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God?—that heavenly communion and reſt which has been mentioned? Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the ſin of the world!*—Behold him exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveneſs of ſins!†—Come to him as a ſinner, and touch, with humble confidence, but the hem of his garment, and you ſhall be made whole;‡—Wait upon him, and you ſhall obtain both ſtrength and liberty; for if the Son make you free, you ſhall be free indeed ‖ Reſpecting your ſenſe of weakneſs, let me add that proviſion made for fallen nature, correſponding to its various wants, is at once a character and an evidence of our religion. It is a glorious peculiarity of it, that its promiſes correſpond with its precepts. To uſe the language which beſt conveys its meaning, The kingdom of God is not in WORD only, but alſo

* John i. 29. † Acts v. 31. ‡ Matt. ix. 21. ‖ John viii. 36.

in POWER.* He who enlightens the blind eyes, undertakes to ſtrengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees.† The Spirit of wiſdom and underſtanding is ſent to be alſo a Spirit of might, of grace, and of ſupplication.‡ It is peculiar to our Teacher that he enables as well as inſtructs his diſciples; he firſt preſents a proſpect of the inheritance, then a title to it thro' his death, and together with theſe, affords ſtrength to riſe and purſue it. Turn to the thirty-ſixth chapter of Ezekiel, and you will find your caſe amply provided for,‖ but recollect that it is added, '*I will yet for this be inquired of, to do it for them.*§ *Is any afflicted, let him pray.*'¶

But I muſt not paſs by the temptation you mentioned reſpecting the efficacy of prayer: you will, perhaps, too readily object, 'Here it is that I ſink;

* 1 Cor. iv. 20.
† Iſa. xxxv. 3—6.
‡ Compare Zech. xii. 10. with Eph. i. 19.
‖ Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. § Ezek. xxxvi. 37.
¶ James v. 13.

I prayed earneſtly for the life of the deceaſed; I thought at one time I ſaw ſigns of a recovery, but the event makes me fear that I was not heard, and that I have no FRIEND left now in earth or heaven.

A little conſideration will, I hope, ſhew you your miſtake, and prove that a petition may be graciouſly accepted, when its particular object is not granted. Did not our LORD declare that his Father heard him always?* Are we not told that when in the days of his fleſh he had offered up prayers, with ſtrong crying and tears, unto Him that is able to ſave him from death, he was HEARD in that he feared?† But conſider I pray you how he was heard: Certainly not by having the cup taken away, (a cup at which human nature, however perfect muſt recoil) but in being accepted when he prayed; in being ſupported while he drank it; and in victoriouſly accompliſhing his grand deſign through drinking it to the very dregs.

* John xi. 42. † Heb. v. 7.

To come nearer to our own condition, we find St. PAUL going to CHRIST for deliverance from some severe trial which he calls a thorn in the flesh; he tells us that he also was heard, and in the same way as his master; not by being released from suffering, but by receiving something more honourable and advantageous; namely, that grace which not only supports a believer through his trials, but puts a healing virtue into them.

Far removed from the holy resignation of our master, we too much resemble in our prayers, the impatience of our children. I remember when a sick one of mine has had some medicine to take, he has called loudly to me to come and assist him against those who were endeavouring to force it down: he probably, wondered at my refusing to relieve him; but the little sufferer did not consider, though often told, that he was not to be helped in that way; he did not recollect, that while I tenderly felt his cry, the very compassio-

I felt for him, and the desire I had to relieve him, kept me from taking away the bitter draught.

The truth is (and it is a truth frequently told us) that our heavenly Father always sends his children the things they ask, or better things. He answers their petitions in kind or in kindness. But while we think only of our ease, he consults our profit :—We are urgent about the body, he about the soul: We call for present comfort, he considers our everlasting rest : and therefore, when he sends not the very things we ask, he hears us by sending greater than we can ask or think.*

Is any, therefore, afflicted, let him pray ; not only in the public sanctuary, or in the retired closet, but let him consider that there is a new and living way consecrated through the vail† of a Redeemer's human nature, from every scene of retirement or action to a MERCY SEAT ; where he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness; especially such as sit in dark-

* Eph. iii. 20. † Heb. x. 20.

neſs and the ſhadow of death.* Our very miſery and infirmity ſhould, in deſect of other preachers, point out the ſeat of our relief; and direct ſuch frail and depraved creatures to the common friend of the weary and heavy laden. Pouring into his boſom all our complaints, we at once obey his command, honour his character, and obtain his aſſiſtance: for we have not an high prieſt who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.†

Is it not a time of need with you? endeavour, at his command, to approach with an holy confidence, for the ſupply of all you need according to his riches in glory;‡ and, at this time particularly, for the illumination and comfort of his Holy Spirit. He whom you ſupplicate not only invites, but reaſons with you. 'If ye, *being evil, know*

* Pſa. cvii. 9, 10. † Heb. iv. 15, 16. ‡ Phil. iv. 19.

*how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him!'**

The religion of education and custom obtains, more or less, every where; but serious, vital, spiritual religion, is a case of necessity with us all. We summon our forces, we ransack our stores, we spend our money, for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not;† we look every way, and call to every thing, till each in return loudly replies, '*It is not in me.*'‡ Well, indeed, will it be, if, after all our fruitless efforts, we are brought to feel that the provisions of the Gospel are the only bread for a hungry soul, the only balm for a wounded heart.

However foreign, my dear friend, these truths were from your consideration when we first sat down together, if

* Luke xi. 13. † Isa. lv. 1.
‡ Job xxviii. 14.

it ſhall pleaſe Him, who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs,* to ſhine into your heart, and effectually diſcover the exceeding riches of his grace in theſe proviſions; then, though you ſit weeping over your loſs, we are aſſured from unqueſtionable authority, that angels are rejoicing for† your unſpeakable gain. We are certain alſo, that not only every real friend will cry, '*This day is ſalvation come to the houſe*‡ where we lately wept;' but that drying your tears, you, yourſelf will be compelled to expreſs your grateful ſenſe of the correction you now deplore, and ſing, with a companion and fellow-proficient in the ſchool of affliction,‖

Father, I bleſs thy gentle hand;
How kind was thy chaſtiſing rod
That forc'd my conſcience to a ſtand,
And brought my wand'ring ſoul to God!
Fooliſh and vain, I went aſtray
Ere I had felt thy ſcourges Lord;
I left my guide,—I loſt my way;

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Luke xv. 10. ‡ Luke xix. 9.
‖ Pſa. cxix. 67—71.

But now I love and keep thy word.

And here, ſuffer me to drop a word or two reſpecting theſe

OUR COMPANIONS in the houſe of mourning. Society is peculiarly pleaſant when we are benighted on a journey: and eſpecially that of a citizen of the place to which we are going. It is encouraging to travel with thoſe, who are convinced, that if they are chaſtened of the Lord, it is, that they ſhould not be condemned with the world.* Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:† and here they are educating for it. Here they ſit at the foot of the croſs, and receive leſſons of faith and patience, of humility and temperance.

Bleſſed alſo are the pure in heart; for they here ſee God;‡ who never ſo unveils himſelf as in ſeaſons of diſtreſs. In ſight of his character and word, they bow before his providence, yea truſt him in the ſtroke; for hope is made to ariſe here, as a light in darkneſs.

* 1 Cor. xi. 32. † Matt. v. 3. ‡ Matt. v. 8.

Here the ſpiritual huſbandman is taught to go forth weeping, and bearing the precious ſeed of faith and love, penitence and prayer; aſſured that he ſhall come again with joy, bringing his ſheaves with him,* Here alſo the heavenly ſcholar acquires the tongue of the learned, that he ſhould know how to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary.† And here the true ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt is found fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life‡ in the very valley and ſhadow of death. He is here inſtructed to caſt down imaginations,‖ thoſe reaſonings which peculiarly infeſt and darken the houſe of mourning; and taking the ſhield of faith, and the ſword of the ſpirit; he wreſtles not only with fleſh and blood, but with principalities and powers;§—a mighty though ſecret conflict which God ſhall one day declare to the world; and which, when explained, will leave

* Pſa. cxxvi. 6. † Iſa. l. 4. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 12.
‖ 2 Cor. x. 5. § Eph. vi. 12—16, 17.

its moſt celebrated heroes ſilent in darkneſs.*

'*Go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flock;*'† for in this houſe they all have left the prints of their feet. Here ſtood Jacob weeping over his beloved Rachel;‡ and here Aaron deplored his ſons.‖ Here we trace the ſteps of David going up to his chamber and crying with a loud voice, '*Would God I had died for thee, O Abſalom, my ſon! my ſon!*'§ and thoſe of Ezekiel, who, forbidden to cry, ſilently reſigned the deſire of his eyes to the ſtroke.¶ But enumeration is vain: hither came all the ſons of God, the only begotten not excepted, for JESUS himſelf ſtood and wept at the grave of a friend.**

With ſuch company, is it not far better to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting?††—I knew one of theſe, a man who had ſeen

* 1 Sam. ii. 9. † Cant. i. 8. ‡ Gen. xxxv. 20.
‖ Lev. x. 3. § 2 Sam, xviii. 33.
¶ Ezek. xxiv. 16. ** John xi. 35. †† Eccl. vii. 2.

affliction by a rod* like yours;—a man who walked and wept in solitude, but with no expectation of being overheard. There is something sacred in grief, and we cannot listen to its effusions with too much candour: great candour, indeed, is here required, but, if afforded, it may procure you at least, a companion, as you pass through this vale of tears.

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* * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * ‘*Set thee up way marks*;† I desire here to set them up, and to record the severest of my visitations in the house of my pilgrimage. Lord prepare me for the next!’

‘I perceive I could not have properly sympathised with a friend in a similar case before this stroke. I could not have understood it.’

‘I have, at times, so felt the importance of eternal things, that I thought the loss of any present comfort would be tolerable:—but I had no idea how much de-

* Lam. iii. 1. † Jer. xxxi. 21.

pended on being ready, when the Son of Man came in such a providence.'

'I feel I now stand in the right position to see the world and the word;—they both appear under aspects entirely new.

'When I find my joys "packed up and gone;" my heart slain; the delight of my eyes taken away;—when I recollect who is gone before her, who is following, and what remains for the world to offer; my heart cries, *I loathe it, I would not live alway;*'*—'I thank God that I am also to go.'

'I perceive I did not know how much my life was bound up in the life of a creature: when she went, nothing seemed left: one is not; and the rest seem a few thin and scattered remains.'

'And yet how much better for my lamb to be suddenly housed, to slip unexpectedly into the fold to which I was conducting her, than remain exposed here?—perhaps become a victim?'

'I cried, 'O Lord, spare my child!'

* Job. vii. 16.

—he did—but not as I meant; he snatched it from danger, and took it to his own home.'

'I have often prayed, 'Lord, soften my heart! humble my pride! destroy my levity!' I knew enough of his way to fear the means; and he has in mercy towards me, regarded my soul more than my feelings.'

'I prayed earnestly for her life: duty compelled me to say, '*Thy will be done.*'—but I meant nothing.'

'O my God, how long hast thou come seeking fruit on this tree!* how much hast thou done to done to cultivate it?—shall it still remain fruitless? shall it be cut down after all?'

'My passions forged impressions that she would live; but I now plainly perceive I am called to regard God and not impressions.'

'I have been long like one in a fever attended at times, with a strong delirium: I begged hard that I might not

* Luke xiii. 7.

be bled, but he meant a cure, and pierced my heart.'

'O how ſlender, how brittle the thread on which hang all my earthly joys!'

'I wiſh ever to be aſking, 'Am I ready, ſhould he ſend again and take * * *, or * * *, or myſelf?'—Setting my houſe in order* will not make death approach ſooner; but, that it will render his coming much eaſier, I feel by ſad experience.'

'When I paſs by the blaze of diſſipation and intemperance, I feel a moment's relief. I ſay to my heart, 'Be ſtill;'—at leaſt ſhe is not left to follow theſe *ignes fatui*: how much better is even the grave for my T——, than the end of theſe things?'†

'It is vain for me to wiſh, as I have done, to leave the world and go to my Father, that I might enquire into the whole of the caſe;—the reaſons, the ſteps, the iſſue, &c. In a ſhort time

* Iſa. xxxviii. 1. † Rom. vi. 21.

I ſhall,—but he ſays enough now, if I have ears to hear.'

'In the mean time, help me, O my God and Father, to recollect that I received this drop of earthly comfort from a ſpring which ſtill remains! help me to feel that nothing eſſential is altered! for with thee is the fountain of life:*—part of myſelf is already gone to thee, help what remains to follow.

* * * * * * * * * * *

If this humble attempt to improve your affliction has been attended with any ſucceſs, you will readily admit a few concluding hints with reſpect to

OUR DUTY in ſuch circumſtances. And one of the firſt, and principal duties of the ſtate, is, as hath been expreſſed, to ACKNOWLEDGE God in it. It was charged upon ſome, that they returned not to him that ſmote them, nor ſought the Lord† in their diſtreſs. On the contrary, the clear apprehenſion Job had of a divine hand in his afflictions, is as inſtructive as his patience un-

* Pſa. xxxvi. 9. † Isa. ix. 13.

der them. While Grief rent his man-
le, Faith fell down and worſhipped—
The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken a-
way, bleſſed be the name of the Lord.'*
Let us learn from him never to loſe ſight
of the Author, by an undue regard to
he mere circumſtances of our loſs.
We may think and ſpeak of the ſymp-
toms and ſtages of the late removal ;—
of the phyſicians, of the remedies, &c.
in their ſuppoſed right or wrong appli-
cation ; but not ſo as to forget that an
unerring Providence preſided over the
whole, yea, actually conducted every
part on reaſons as righteous as inſcruta-
ble.

Whatever may appear to us peculiar
in the ſick chamber, the whole was but
God's intended method of removing
one, who had lived his full (i. e. his
appointed) time. Seeing his days are
determined, the number of his month s
are with thee : thou haſt appointed him
his bounds which he cannot paſs.† In-
ſtead of fixing our attention upon means

* Job i. 21.

† Job xiv. 5, 6.

and creatures, of which we know so very little, let us turn to Him who wrought by these instruments, and merely effected his own determinations by them. Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of;* Let not the creature hide the Creator, nor present things remain the fatal screen of the future; but in every occurrence, mark the great Cause, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things:† who numbereth the very hairs of our head, and without whom even a sparrow falls not to the ground.‡

While others, therefore are wandering without an object, and bereaved without a comforter, yea, are going to their worst enemy for relief, let us endeavour to say with Peter, 'Lord, *to whom shall we go,*‖ *but to* THEE?' Consider the great Physician as now proposing a most serious question to your conscience, '*Wilt thou be made whole?*'§ May the language of your heart be that of

*Isa. ii. 22. † Rom. xi. 36. ‡ Matt. x. 29, 30.
‖ John vi. 68. § John v. 6.

the apoſtle's, "If by any means;"* then, though ſeemingly ſwallowed up of this grief, like Jonah, you ſhall find a reſource in it, and finally be preſerved by it.† This dart, like that which once pierced an impoſthume in battle, ſhall bring health with its wound; and you ſhall be enabled, with many that are gone before you, to ſay, 'The Lord *hath chaſtened me ſore: but he hath not given me over unto death.*‡

Duty alſo directs you to moderate your grief. Our heavenly Father, who knows our frame, and remembers that we are but duſt,‖ allows us to mourn when he afflicts us; he often, in his providence, calls us to it, and charges us to weep with them that weep:§ but he admoniſhes us alſo of a danger on each hand. 'My *ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*¶ If we ſeriouſly profeſs chriſtianity, our very profeſſion implies, (not only a ſubjection

* Phil. iii 11. † Jon. ii. 7—10. ‡ Psa. cxviii. 18.
‖ Psa. ciii. 14. § Rom. xii. 15. ¶ Heb. xii. 5.

to our Lord's will, but) that we have ſpecial reſources in our affliction; ſeveral of which have been already named: that, among other of our privileges, there is a peace from God which paſſeth all underſtanding, to keep our hearts and minds* through life and death; and that we have many reaſons for not ſorrowing as others who have no hope.† Beſides which, chriſtians have a poſt of honour to maintain: an high calling‡ to demonſtrate and commend: we ſhall (like the pilot in a ſtorm) be brought to our principles; and, as ſorrowful yet always rejoicing,‖ ſhould prove that we have them not now to learn.

On the contrary, there is ſuch a thing as nurſing and cheriſhing our grief; employing a "buſy meddling memory to muſter up paſt endearments," and perſonate a vaſt variety of tender and heart-rending circumſtances. There is a tearing open the wound afreſh by

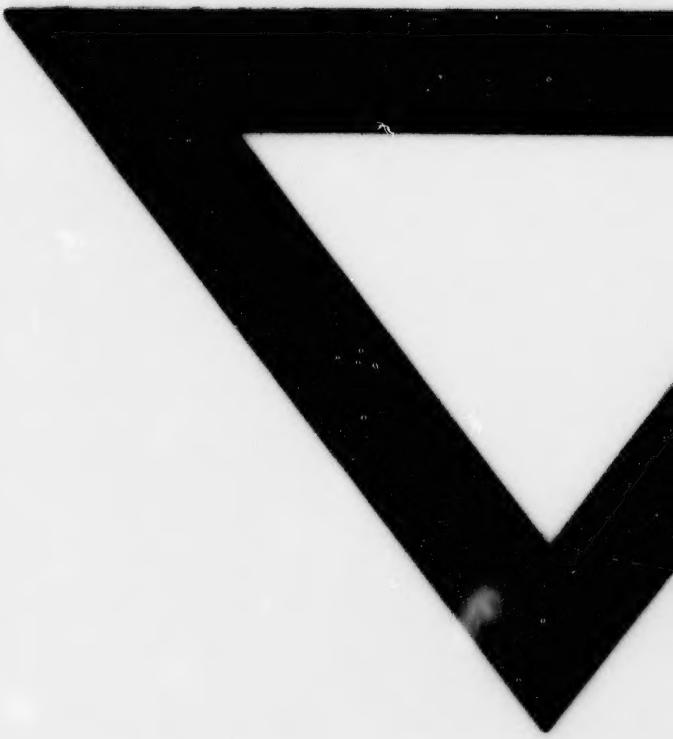
* Phil. iv. 7. † Thes. iv. 13.
‡ Phil. iii. 14. ‖ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

ſtooping to the ſenſes, and ſpeaking to the heart of man:" ever ſaying, 'Look to my croſs, take my yoke, and lean upon my arm, and ye ſhall find reſt.' He ſought the houſe of mourning to comfort the ſiſters of Lazarus: he met a widow following her only child, and, when the Lord ſaw her, he had compaſſion on her, and ſaid unto her, '*Weep not.*'* May he meet you at this time, my dear friend, with conſolations which none but himſelf can afford: and then, at the very grave, ſhall that ſaying be brought to paſs, '*Death is ſwallowed up in victory.*'† Let ſuch fear, as deſpiſe our heavenly friend, our proſpects, proviſions, companions, and ſenſe of duty: God with us and all things in God, is light in darkneſs, life in death. The words which revived him, who ſtyles himſelf your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jeſus Chriſt,‡ remain to cheer a ſolitude darker (if poſſible) than his. '*Fear*

* Luke vii. 13. † 1 Cor. xv. 54. ‡ Rev. i. 9.

not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'*

To conclude:—The late event solemnly repeats its author's charge, "BE YE ALSO READY."† Your friend is gone: your following is certain: it may be sudden; it may be next. But should it take place this night, and find you provided with nothing better for the change than the miserable subterfuges of the profane, or the scarcely less miserable supports of the formal, what an alarm (if you are not left to the most affecting delusion or stupidity) will it occasion! What an awful transition to pass from the SAVIOUR to the JUDGE! without love to him; without even an acquaintance with him; unwilling, unreconciled, unrenewed! And to him who has so often invited you, warned you, and, at times, affected your conscience with the truths we have been considering!——What a

* Rev. i. 17, 18. † Matt. xxiv. 44.

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